LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

COMMERCIAL NATIONAL BANK BUILDING

125 S. CLARK STREET

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, April 7, 2016

CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
David Reifman, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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COMMERCIAL NATIONAL BANK BUILDING
125 S. CLARK STREET

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: **1907**
ARCHITECT: **D. H. BURNHAM & COMPANY**

The Commercial National Bank Building, located at the northeast corner of Clark Street and Adams Street, is the oldest surviving high-rise commercial bank building in the Loop designed by D. H. Burnham & Company. One of Chicago's premier architectural firms at the turn of the 20th century, Burnham & Company was headed by architect and planner Daniel Hudson Burnham, who was best known for his role as Director of Works for the 1893 Columbian Exposition and as the co-author of the seminal 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. The firm was the first Chicago architectural office to have a substantial nationwide practice, with branch offices in New York and San Francisco. Burnham & Company designed more than 220 buildings across the country between 1896 and 1912, the year of Burnham's death.

Burnham & Company embraced and promoted the Classical designs made popular by the Columbian Exposition during the late 1890s, adapting Beaux Arts and Classical Revival elements to a variety of monumental building types, including rail road stations, museums, department stores, office buildings, and banks. The Commercial National Bank Building exemplifies the firm's adaptation of Classical Revival to the high-rise commercial form.

The Commercial National Bank Building was also among the first of Burnham & Company's designs to tie the tripartite commercial high-rise to the iconic temple-style bank building to create a new form of bank building in Chicago. Firm architect Ernest Graham used engaged Corinthian columns to mark the second-floor banking hall, recalling the colonnades of traditional bank buildings, while retaining the relatively unadorned center shaft and ornamented cornice typical of high-rise commercial buildings of the period. This marriage of forms would characterize nearly two dozen downtown bank buildings designed in Chicago and other US cities by Burnham and its successor firm, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

Commercial National Bank Building/
Commonwealth Edison Building
125 S. Clark Street

The Commercial National Bank Building/Commonwealth Edison Building is located at the north-east corner of North Clark Street and West Adams Street in the Chicago Loop.

BUILDING HISTORY

Commercial National Bank 1863-1910
One of several national banks formed in the wake of the National Banking Act of 1863, the Commercial National Bank was among the largest and oldest financial institutions in Chicago by the turn of the 20th century. The bank was authorized to begin business on January 13, 1865, with P. R. Westfall as president and $200,000 in capital stock. Through the late 19th century, the bank grew and prospered under the leadership of Henry F. Eames. A native of New York, Eames had come to Ottawa, Illinois in 1848, where he established the National City Bank. In 1867, three years after leaving Ottawa for Chicago, Eames purchased a controlling interest in the Commercial National Bank. For the next 20 years, Henry Eames served as the bank's president, retiring only after ill health left him unable to continue in that role. Eames died in June of 1897, just two months after announcing his retirement. Under Eames' leadership, the board of directors for the bank grew to include such notable Chicago citizens as George L. Otis, Henry Field, O.W. Potter, and Robert Todd Lincoln.

James H. Eckels, a member of the bank's board of directors since 1891, succeeded Eames as president of the Commercial National Bank in 1898. A native of Princeton, Illinois, he attended law school in Albany, New York and opened a law practice in Ottowa, Illinois in 1881. Eckels' entrée into the banking world was unconventional, but his subsequent success in the arena was a testament to his natural abilities. While in Albany, Eckels had befriended then New York governor Grover Cleveland. In 1892, he stumped for Cleveland during his re-election campaign and gave several impressive speeches in favor of Cleveland's tariff reform platform. After Cleveland took office in 1893, he nominated James Eckels for the position of Comptroller of the Currency, despite the fact that Eckels had no direct banking experience. Over protests from some senators, Eckels was confirmed due largely to the support of former Comptroller Edward S. Lacey. Almost immediately, Eckels was tested in his new position as the Panic of 1893 gripped the nation. 165 national banks throughout the country closed in a ten week period. Eckels successfully negotiated the re-opening of 115 of the banks and shepherded them through the worst of the crisis.

Eckels served as Comptroller under Cleveland's administration through 1897, but plans for his next professional move were well underway before the end of Cleveland's term. The Commercial National Bank's board of directors had been courting Eckels for months before Eames' retirement that spring, and he had been approached by several other financial institutions as well. In August 1897, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that "negotiations are now pending between the [Commercial National] bank officials and Mr. Eckels…the bank directors do not ask him to give up his position as [C]omptroller but want him to take charge of the Commercial National at the end of his term, which will be in the near future." Eckels resigned as Comptroller in December 1897 after McKinley defeated Cleveland in the presidential election, and took up his new post in Chicago on January 1, 1898.

Eckels' reputation contributed to a marked increase in business at the Commercial National

The Commercial National Bank, established in 1863, was one of the largest and oldest financial institutions in Chicago by the turn of the twentieth century. Henry F. Eames (top left) served as the bank's president until his death in 1897. James H. Eckels (top right), who served as United States Comptroller from 1893-1897, succeeded Eames to the presidency. By the early 1900s, Eckels had initiated plans for a new headquarters building to replace the bank's existing headquarters at Dearborn and Monroe Streets (bottom, demolished).

Bank almost immediately after he took office as president. During his first two years as chief executive, deposits at the bank more than doubled, from $9 million to over $19 million. By the turn of the 20th century, the Commercial National Bank was among the top financial institutions in the Chicago, behind only First National and Continental National Banks. The bank's headquarters up to that time were housed in a handsome seven-story building at the southeast corner of Dearborn Street and Monroe Street (demolished), but by the early 1900s, Eckels and the board had begun plans for a prominent new building that would reflect the bank's tremendous success.

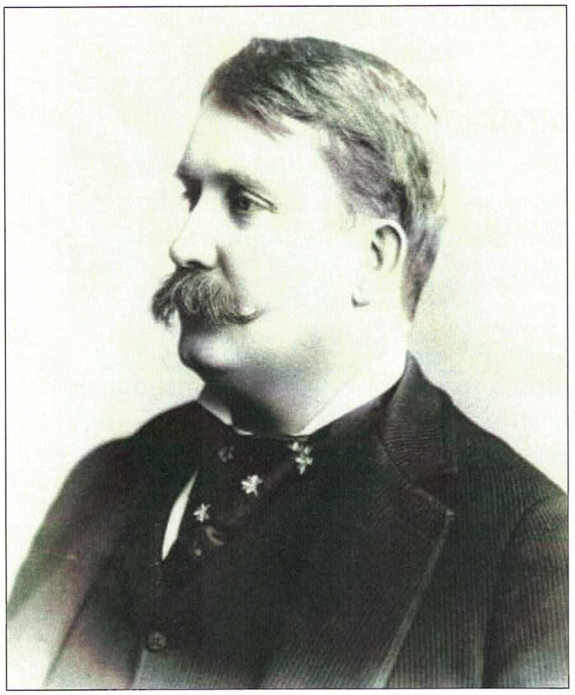
Commercial National Bank commissioned D. H. Burnham & Company to design its new headquarters. The firm had just completed work on the First National Bank Building at the northwest corner of Dearborn and Monroe (demolished in 1969), which at the time was the largest and most expensive office building to be constructed in the city. Ernest R. Graham (later a principal for Burnham's successor firm—Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White) drew the plans for the building and supervised the construction. In May 1905, the bank secured leases for a large parcel fronting 190 feet on Clark Street and 180 feet on Adams Street, setting a record for price per square foot on Clark Street. On December 28, 1905, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Commercial National Bank had secured a building permit estimated at $2.6 million, the second largest building permit in the city's history, topped only by the First National Bank Building's $3 million permit from 1902. "The Commercial National Bank Building," the *Tribune* trumpeted, "will rank second only to the First National among the great office buildings of the city."

Work began on the eighteen-story structure on January 10, 1906. Ninety-two caissons were sunk on the site, many while tenants were still occupying the existing four- and six-story structures that were eventually demolished as the new construction progressed. The first four floors of the building were built and a temporary roof installed above the first floor so that the Santa Fe and Nickel Plate Railways—primary tenants of the new building—could continue to do business.

The building opened on May 1, 1907. The *Inland Architect and News Record* noted the "fine proportions" of the structure, which made it "a striking and interesting site for the stranger as well as a matter of local pride." *The Construction News* called the building "a most admirable example of classical design applied to modern requirements....The impression is distinctly one of solidity and strength and of unity and beauty as the eye discovers the harmony of detail which is preserved throughout."

Unfortunately, James Eckels did not live to see the fruition of these efforts, having died of heart failure just two weeks before. The Commercial National Bank occupied the entire second floor of the new building, and the remaining spaces were leased to a variety of commercial enterprises, including several railroad companies (the Illinois Central, the Burlington, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern, and the El Paso & Southwestern), steel companies (Illinois Steel Company, Carnegie Steel Company, Shelby Steel Company), the Standard Oil Company, and the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, among others. The building was fully leased at the time of its opening.

After just three years in its new building, the Commercial National Bank merged with Conti-



Clockwise from top left: Daniel H. Burnham, circa 1894; Commercial National Bank Building postcard circa 1907; Ernest R. Graham, circa 1894

The Commercial National Bank commissioned D. H. Burnham & Company to design their new headquarters. Ernest R. Graham, later a principal for Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, drew the plans and supervised construction. Work began on the 18-story structure on January 10, 1906, and the building opened on May 1, 1907. At the time, it was the second largest and most expensive office building constructed in Chicago.

nental National Bank to create the Continental & Commercial National Bank of Chicago. With a combined $175 million in deposits, the new entity was one of the largest banks in the United States. In 1912, Continental & Commercial National Bank began plans for a new headquarters building at 208 South LaSalle Street (designated Chicago Landmark, 2007), also designed by D. H. Burnham & Company. That year, the Commercial National Bank Building was sold to Commonwealth Edison, although Commercial National Bank would remain in the building until the completion of the new Continental & Commercial National Bank Building in 1914.

The Edison Building 1912-1998

The building at 125 South Clark, renamed the Edison Building in 1912, served as the headquarters for utility juggernaut Commonwealth Edison for over 50 years, a period that saw expansive growth of the company and the proliferation of electrification across the Chicago area. Commonwealth Edison was founded in 1882 as the Western Edison Light Company, reorganized as the Chicago Edison Company in 1887 and merged with Commonwealth Electric Light & Power Company in 1907 to become the Commonwealth Edison Company. Under the direction of Samuel Insull, an associate of Thomas Edison and second vice president of the General Electric Company, Commonwealth Edison absorbed dozens of competitors during the late 19th and early 20th century to become the largest utility company in the state. Using low rates and shrewd marketing schemes, Insull established a virtual monopoly on electric service in Chicago. Commonwealth Edison signed exclusive contracts with the area's transit companies and with the city. Insull oversaw the installation of the world's first modern steam turbine electrical generator at Commonwealth Edison's Fisk Street station in 1902, expanded his company's network into suburban utilities during the early 1900s, and worked to establish a state utility commission in 1913.

The company's purchase of the Commercial National Bank Building reflected the growing importance of Commonwealth Edison in the city and the larger region as electric lighting and power transformed society. By 1920, the company employed over 6,000 workers and served approximately 500,000 customers, with annual revenues reaching $40 million. Commonwealth Edison built and operated massive electrical generating stations on Fisk Street, West 22nd Street, Crawford Avenue, and the Sanitary Canal. The company's downtown presence also expanded during the 1920s, when Commonwealth Edison purchased the adjacent Marquette Building (1895, designated Chicago Landmark) to enlarge their corporate headquarters.

Although the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression brought about the end of Insull's utilities empire (he went bankrupt and fled to Europe in the early 1930s), Commonwealth Edison survived the economic downturn and experienced unprecedented expansion in the post-World War II period. Demand for energy soared and Commonwealth Edison received a new 42-year franchise from Chicago.

In 1969, Commonwealth Edison moved its executive offices, as well as its sales, advertising, PR, purchasing, and production departments from 125 S. Clark to the newly-completed First National Bank Building (now Chase Tower) at 10 South Dearborn Street. The company retained ownership of the 125 S. Clark and kept approximately 1,100 employees in the building. A May 20, 1965 article in the *Chicago Tribune* stated that the key reason behind Common-

Reproduced from CHICAGO HERALD of December 14 th.

WHEN you adopt this custom Christmas Eve, use Electric Candles—brighter, more cheerful and much safer. Perfectly in accord with the spirit of this age-old Yuletide custom, Electric Candles retain all the storied symbolism of the form of the candle—and give the practice the modern setting which modern conditions demand.

Choose Your Electric Candles Now

Electric Candles—most suitable for window lighting Christmas Eve—are now obtainable at any of our Branch Appliance Stores. As illustrated, these Electric Candles stand 11 inches high, with gilt bases and tops, and equipped with lamp and long silk connecting cord. These Electric Candles make splendid decorations for other occasions, too. Price, $1.75 the pair.

Commonwealth Edison Company

120 West Adams Street, or

ELECTRIC SHOP,
Michigan and Jackson Blvds.
LOGAN SQUARE BRANCH,
2547 No. Kedzie Blvd.
AUSTIN BRANCH STORE,
5646 West Lake Street
SO. CHICAGO BRANCH STORE,
9163 So. Chicago Ave.

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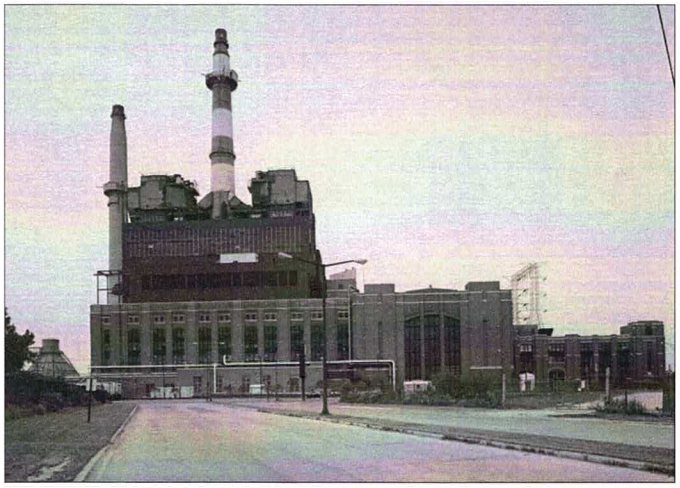
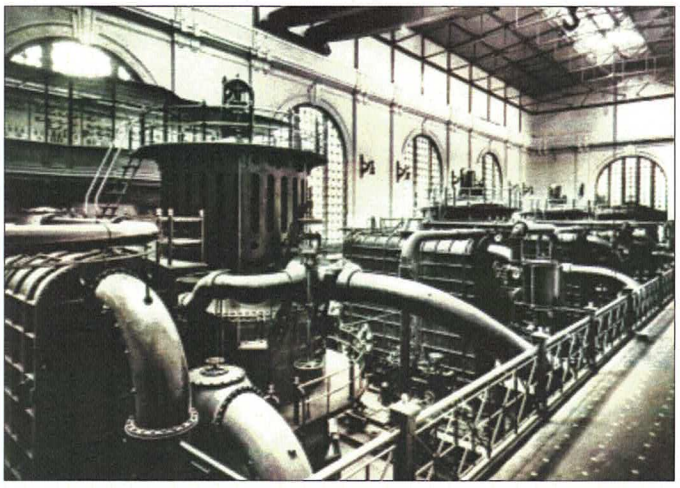




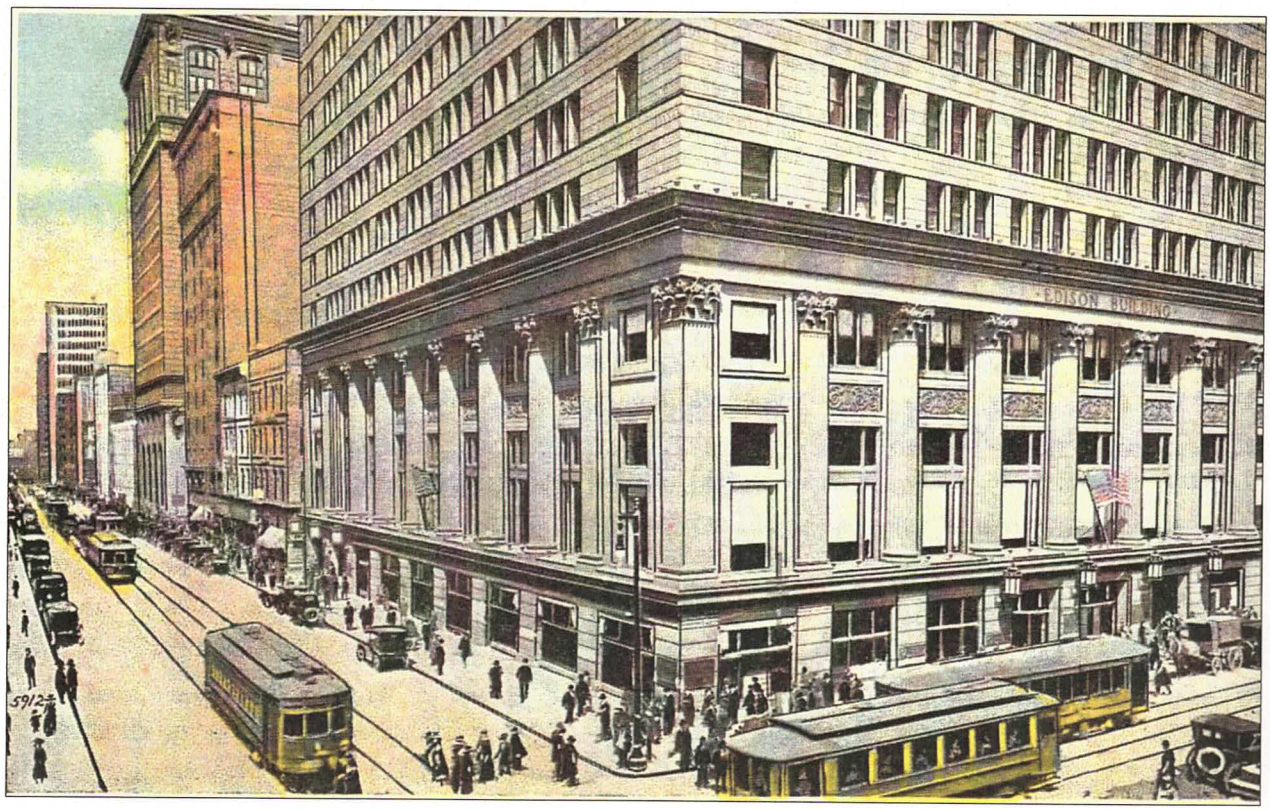
After just three years in the new building, Commercial National Bank merged with Continental National Bank to form Continental & Commercial National Bank. In 1912, utility juggernaut Commonwealth Edison purchased the building, and it served as the company's national headquarters for the next fifty years. Under the direction of president Samuel Insull, Commonwealth Edison became the largest utility company in the state.

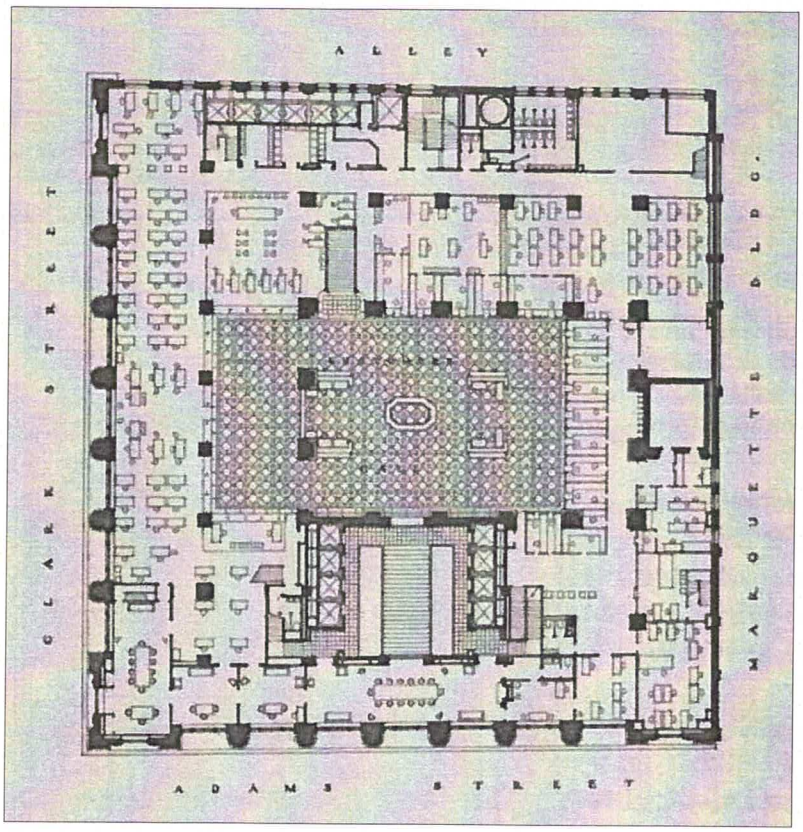
Top left: Commonwealth Edison advertisement from Chicago Daily Tribune, December 1914

Top right: Crawford Generating Station at 3501 S. Pulaski Road, opened in 1924

Middle right: Fisk Generating Station at 1111 W. Cermak Road, opened in 1902

Bottom right Samuel Insull on the cover of Time Magazine, November 29, 1926





Commonwealth Edison maintained the exterior of the former Commercial National Bank Building with few alterations during its 80-year occupancy of the building. After 1912, the building was commonly referred to as "The Edison Building."

Until a major interior renovation in the late 1940s, the second floor banking hall served as Commonwealth Edison's "Customers Hall." First floor retail spaces were transformed into an "Electric Shop" that displayed the company's products and services.

Top: Postcard showing the Edison Building c. 1915

Bottom: Floorplan of "Customers Hall" dated 1933

wealth Edison's move was the new bank building's status as an "all-electric building." In 1996, two years after becoming part of a parent company named Unicom, ComEd moved the remaining employees out of 125 S. Clark. The company's corporate headquarters remain at 10 S. Dearborn. In 1998, 125 S. Clark was purchased by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and served as CPS headquarters until the agency left the building and moved to 1 North Dearborn Street in 2014. The building is currently being rehabilitated for office use.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Located at the northeast corner of West Adams Street and South Clark Street in Chicago's downtown Loop business district, the Commercial National Bank Building has primary facades and entrances along both Adams and Clark Streets. The building is 18 stories tall and is regularly fenestrated, with a rectangular footprint from the first floor to the fifth floor and a U-shaped footprint from the sixth floor to its top. The building shares a party wall along its east elevation with the adjacent Marquette Building and abuts an alley along its north elevation.

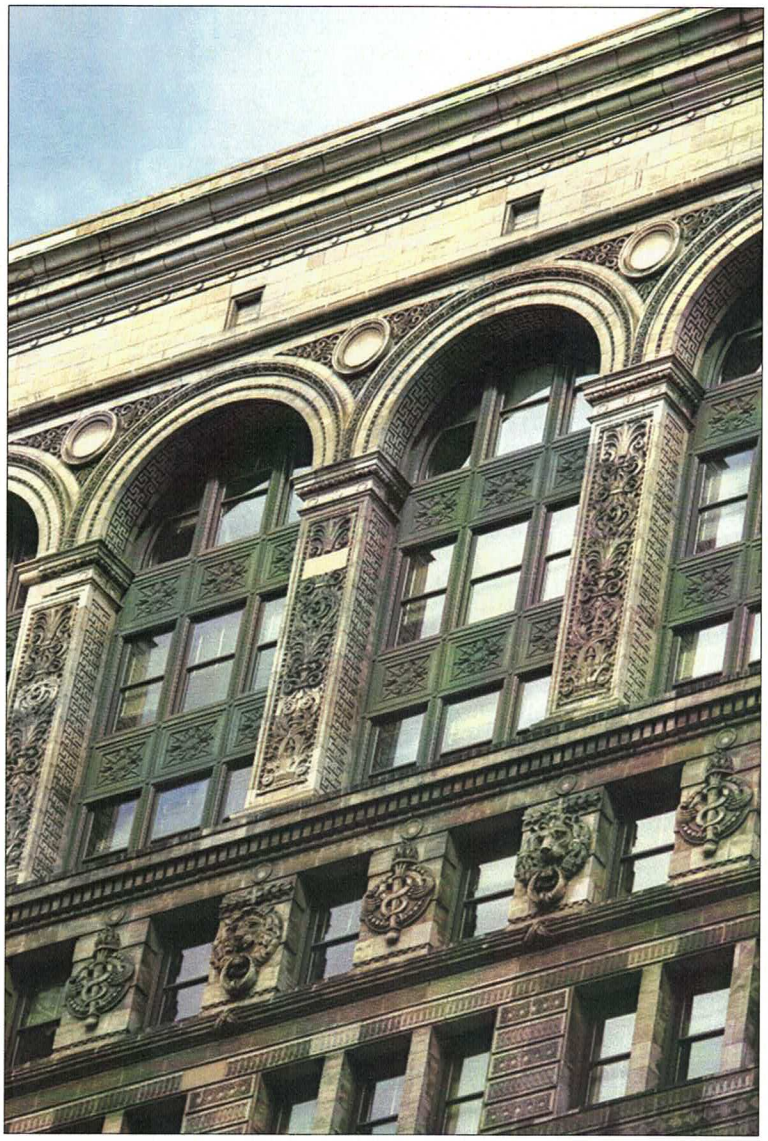
At its primary south and west street-facing elevations, the building is regularly fenestrated and displays a tripartite façade composition typical of early 20th-century skyscraper architecture, with a distinct base, mid-section, and top. The primary facades are clad in white granite at its four-story base, with a colonnade of giant order fluted Corinthian engaged columns spanning its second, third, and fourth stories. The ten-story mid-section is clad with ashlar white terra cotta units (produced by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company) that are highly detailed with Classical-inspired decorative reliefs. The 16th story, an intermediate floor visually separated by cornices from higher and lower floors, is ornamented with terra cotta medallions depicting snake-entwined torches and lion masks, both common Classical Revival style motifs. At the top three stories of the building the exterior is treated as an arcade with three-story arches framing recessed window openings and cast-iron spandrels. Originally, the building boasted an impressive projecting cornice with modillions and palmettes. When the original cornice began to fail, it was replaced with a simpler terra cotta cornice in 1927.

The building's secondary east and north elevations are regularly fenestrated and are primarily clad in common brick, though they display terra cotta-clad returns near their Adams and Clark Street ends. The building's east-facing exterior light court, not visible from street level, is clad in glazed white tile.

Alterations to the Building by Commonwealth Edison
Most alterations to the building were made by Commonwealth Edison, which occupied the building for over 80 years. Many of these alterations were designed to promote the company and encourage increased consumption of electricity.

Initially, the original second-floor banking hall was left intact and served as the company's "Customers Hall," while the first-floor retail spaces were combined into a single exhibition space, the "Electric Shop," for displaying Commonwealth Edison products and services. The company's first Electric Shop had opened in 1909 in the ground floor and basement of the Railway Exchange Building on Michigan Avenue, and by the 1920s, the company had opened sev-

The Commercial National Bank Building/Edison Building is eighteen stories tall and clad entirely in architectural terra cotta produced by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company. The tripartite composition, typical of early 20th-century skyscrapers, divides the building into a distinct base, mid-section, and top. The building is ornamented on all levels with a variety of Classical Revival design motifs.



Top left: Upper-story arcade, south elevation

Top right: Detail of decorative medallion in the shape of a lion's head, below the upper arcade

Bottom: Colonnade of fluted, engaged Corinthian columns on the four-story base of the building

eral neighborhood Electric Shops throughout the city. The Electric Shop in the Edison Building, which opened in 1915, was the largest store of its kind in the city, and offered a broad array of plug-in electrical appliances, from electric ranges and ice machines to lamps and even automobile accessories. The Edison Building's Electric Store was incredibly successful—a 1919 article from *Electric World* reported that gross sales in the shop had quadrupled since its opening, and that sales for 1918 had exceeded $1 million.

Sometime between 1918 and 1947, a cantilevered black metal soffit with modified Greek key pattern was installed between the first- and second-floors along the Adams Street and Clark Street facades. This soffit housed up-light and indirect down-light fixtures that illuminated the building and served to further advertise the company's main product. The soffit was altered in 1966 to accommodate exposed fluorescent down-light fixtures and heat lamps.

In the 1920s, Commonwealth Edison purchased the adjacent Marquette Building (56 West Adams Street, completed 1895, designed by Holabird & Roche) to enlarge their headquarters. In 1945, large first-floor passageways were cut between the party walls of the Edison Building and the Marquette Building to connect the two structures. Commonwealth Edison sold the Marquette Building in 1957, but the two buildings have remained connected at the first floor.

Between 1947 and 1951, the Edison Building underwent a comprehensive renovation directed by Chicago-based architects Naess & Murphy. The renovations maintained most of the building's 1907 Classical Revival exterior but removed many original interiors. Interior renovations included the upgrading of the Adams Street and Clark Street entrance lobbies, complete removal and flooring over of the original first-floor grand staircases and second-floor banking hall, and renovation of the upper-floor elevator lobbies and office areas. On the building's exterior, the 1947-1951 renovations included alterations to the main Adams Street and Clark Street entrances and retail storefront replacement.

ARCHITECTS D. H. BURNHAM & COMPANY

The Commercial National Bank Building was designed by D.H. Burnham & Company, one of the most prolific and successful architecture firms in Chicago in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The firm was founded in 1896 by architect and planner Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912), and quickly became one of the largest architectural concerns in the country. The firm was the first Chicago architectural office to have a substantial nationwide practice, with branch offices in New York and San Francisco and important buildings constructed in cities throughout the United States, including New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and New Orleans. D. H. Burnham & Co. designed more than 200 buildings between 1892 and 1912, the year Burnham died. At his death, Burnham was eulogized in the *Architectural Record* as "one of the foremost architects and one of the greatest citizens of America." President William Howard Taft called him "one of the foremost architects of the world."

Before forming D. H. Burnham & Co., Daniel Burnham had worked in partnership with architect John Wellborn Root, whom he met while working as a draftsman for Carter, Drake & Wight. Burnham and Root established their firm in 1873, and worked together until Root's ear-

ly death in 1891 at age 41. Within the partnership, Root acted as the designer, and Burnham handled the organization and administration of the firm. During its early years, Burnham & Root received numerous residential commissions from Chicago's upper class, but by the 1880s, the firm shifted focus to larger commercial projects. The Montauk Building, completed in 1882, was their first large-scale commercial commission. Other landmark buildings in Chicago followed, including the Rookery Building (1888) and the Monadnock Building (1891), which was the tallest building in the world at the time of its construction, and remains the tallest skyscraper with masonry load-bearing walls ever built.

In the early 1890s, Daniel Burnham became a national figure in his role as Director of Works for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where he supervised scores of architects and workmen in the construction of Chicago's first world's fair. After John Root's death in 1891, Burnham took a more active role in the architectural design for the fair, assembling a dream team of architects, landscape architects, and planners--including Richard Morris Hunt, McKim, Mead & White, Adler & Sullivan, S. S. Beman, Peabody & Stearns, Henry Ives Cobb, and many others--to bring to life the Classically-inspired "White City" in Jackson Park.

The success of the Exposition was in no small part due to Daniel Burnham's remarkable drive and vision, and marked the beginning of his career as a city planner, which culminated in his development with Edward H. Bennett of the *Plan of Chicago* in 1909. The plan called for, among other things, a continuous park along the Lake Michigan shoreline and inspired the creation of Grant Park, the extension northward of Michigan Avenue and the construction of the Michigan Avenue Bridge and Wacker Drive.

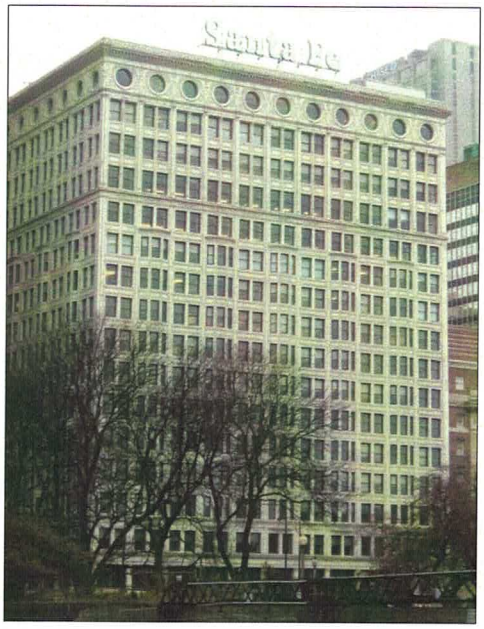
THE CLASSICAL REVIVAL STYLE

The Commercial and National Bank is a fine example of Burnham & Company's use of the Classical Revival style within the framework of the commercial high rise. The use and adaptation of a long-standing historic architectural style to modern building types is consistent with how Americans in general, and Chicagoans in particular, saw architectural design in the early 20th century. The grandiose Classicism of the "White City" displayed at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition proved profoundly influential, and helped to usher in the City Beautiful Movement in America. However, the Expo's sprawling structures arranged around manicured lawns and lagoons contrasted starkly with the Chicago School skyscrapers crowding the city's downtown, where the ballooning price of land led architects and engineers to design what *Industrial Chicago* called "the great airy buildings" that cast out "art where it interferes with the useful." With a few exceptions, most Americans wanted something in between—buildings that combined both modern and up-to-date functions with traditional architectural styles and materials. In that context, the Classical Revival style remained an important part of American cultural life.

The Classical tradition in architecture and design is one of the oldest and most significant traditions in Western civilization, influential from its origins in the Greek city-states of the fifth century, BC, through the present day. The architecture of ancient Greek temples and sacred buildings was widely admired by other Mediterranean cultures, including ancient Rome, which in-

After his success as Director of Works for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, architect Daniel Burnham formed the firm of D. H. Burnham & Company. By the time of Burnham's death in 1912, the firm had designed more than 220 buildings, many of them in the Classical Revival style of architecture that the Exposition had helped to popularize in the late-19th and early 20th-century.

Right: A view of the Columbian Exposition, 1893



Example of Classical Revival buildings in Chicago designed by D. H. Burnham & Company include (clockwise from middle left): The Insurance Exchange Building 157 W. Jackson Blvd (1912); The Railway Exchange/Santa Fe Building, (1904, Historic Michigan Boulevard Landmark District); the Conway Building (1912) and the Marshall Field & Company Building (1892-1914, designated a Chicago Landmark in 2005)

corporated Greek Classical architectural forms and details in its buildings throughout its empire which encompassed regions as far flung as Britain, North Africa, Spain, and Persia.

The effort to keep Classical architecture as a living architectural tradition continued throughout the centuries. Such architecture was an important part of the Italian Renaissance, when architects sought to revive Classicism through a melding of ancient Roman Classical forms with contemporary building types, including palaces and churches.

After the Renaissance, the Classical tradition endured as a source and inspiration in art and architecture through the Baroque era of the 17th century, the Rococo and Neoclassical periods of the 18th and early 19th centuries, and the Greek Revival, Renaissance Revival and Classical Revival periods of the 19th and early 20th centuries in America, and the Post Modern period in the late twentieth century. In its longevity, Classicism is unmatched by any other architectural style. Classical design is regarded as a significant aspect of Western civilization, and buildings intended to house important cultural, economic, or social institutions, whether public or private, often utilized Classical forms and ornament as part of their designs. By the early 1900s, the Classical style was increasingly adapted to a wide variety of building types, including university buildings, railroad stations, hotels, museums, and libraries that developed as large-scale, densely-populated cities grew through industrialization and migration.

The popularity of Classical design was further perpetuated through the late 19th century in architecture schools in both Europe and America, where increasing numbers of architects in training were learning the profession. The most prominent schools, including the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, taught students how to design complex modern buildings while cloaking them in historic architectural styles.

Daniel Burnham and the Classical Revival Style

The 1893 Columbian Exposition marked the beginning of Daniel Burnham's championing of Classical architecture in the United States, both in the design of individual buildings through his architecture firm and through his involvement with the City Beautiful movement, which sought to impose the aesthetic quality and planned order of Classicism to the planning of new American cities. While planning the Expo, Burnham befriended architect Charles McKim, a partner in the architectural firm McKim, Mead & White, which was renowned for its devotion to the Classical tradition espoused by the *École des Beaux-Arts*. In 1896, Burnham traveled to Europe for the first time to study the ancient buildings of Greece and Rome, a pilgrimage taken by many architects of the period. This exposure to Classical architecture in its original form had a profound influence on the work of D. H. Burnham & Company.

Through the late 1890s and early 1900s, D. H. Burnham & Company developed and refined a model of the Classical Revival high-rise office block that would become a signature of the firm in Chicago and other major cities throughout the country. Notable examples in downtown Chicago include the Railway Exchange Building (224 S. Michigan Avenue, 1904, Historic Michigan Boulevard Landmark District), the Insurance Exchange Building (1577-185 W. Jackson Boulevard, 1912), and the Conway Building (26-40 N. Clark Street). The buildings combined

the tripartite arrangement of base, shaft and capital used by earlier skyscrapers of the 1880s and early 1890s with classical detailing in the Beaux-Arts tradition. Unlike the Richardsonian Romanesque designs that preceded them, Burnham & Company's Classical skyscrapers replaced dark brick and rusticated sandstone with granite, marble, limestone, and light glazed brick and terra cotta, again reflecting the influence of the White City on many building types through the early 20th century. Banded rustication, popular in Beaux-Arts designs of the period, was often used to anchor the ground floor of the building, and was more refined than the rough-hewn stonework often seen in the Richardsonian Romanesque. Classical ornament on these buildings referenced temple architecture in both the Greek and Roman traditions, with many buildings exhibiting a colonnaded base with fluted columns or pilasters. Other examples featured an arcaded base that recalled Renaissance Revival designs. The capital sections of Burnham's high rises were the most ornamented, and often featured arcades or colonnades topped by elaborate cornices.

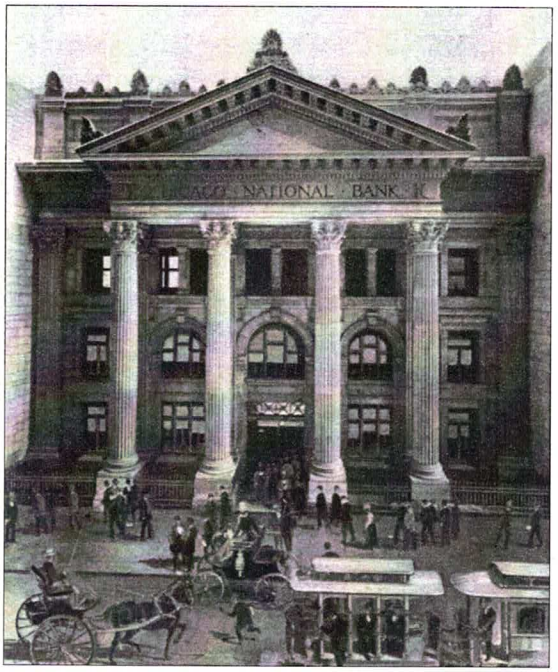
D. H. Burnham & Company's Bank Designs in Chicago

Burnham & Co.'s Classical Revival commercial high-rise model was particularly well-suited to large financial institutions like the Commercial National Bank, which sought to convey a sense of stability and continuity in its new headquarters while enjoying a modern office space. The connection between Classical design and banking goes back to the first financial institutions built in America. Both the First and Second Banks of the United States, built in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, were modeled after Greek and Roman temples. Subsequent banks throughout the country followed this model, creating austere "temples of commerce" that featured colonnades or porticos topped by triangular pediments. So entrenched was this model that over 100 years later, the Chicago National Bank's new three-story building at Monroe and LaSalle streets, which featured a center portico supported by Corinthian columns, was designed specifically by architects Jenny & Mundie to "suggest to the casual passer that the building was unquestionably a bank."

Burnham & Company designed a substantial number of bank buildings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Chicago and other cities, most in the Classical Revival Style. The Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, erected at the northeast corner of LaSalle Street and Jackson Boulevard in 1896, is in keeping with the traditional temple-inspired design—the two-story limestone structure featured a main entrance recessed behind a colonnade of Corinthian capitals, and Corinthian pilasters marked the corners of the building. The bank was demolished in 1923 to make way for a Classical Revival high-rise.

In 1902, First National Bank, then the largest financial institution in the city, commissioned the firm's first high-rise bank building in Chicago. At the time, it was the most expensive building ever constructed in the city. Stylistically, however, the building featured few of the Classical elements that would define Burnham's high-rise commercial architecture. The second-story banking hall was marked on the exterior with simple arcaded windows separated by shallow, unadorned pilasters. The three-story arcaded capital was similarly unornamented.

In Burnham & Company's design for the Commercial National Bank Building, architect Ernest Graham began to explore combining elements of temple-inspired bank buildings with the tripar-



The connection between Classical design and banking goes back to the first financial institutions built in America; the country's first banks were modeled after Greek and Roman Temples. As banks and buildings grew bigger, the Classical Revival high-rise conveyed stability and continuity while provide a modern office space. Examples in Chicago included (clockwise from top left): the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank (D. H. Burnham, 1896, demolished); Chicago National Bank (Jenney & Mundie, 1902, demolished); First National Bank (D.H. Burnham & Co., 1902 (demolished) and the Continental and Commercial Bank Building (1914, designated Chicago Landmark 2007).

tite high-rise form. Instead of shallow pilasters, he used engaged Corinthian columns to mark the second-floor banking hall, recalling the colonnades of traditional bank buildings. While the base of the building reflects more restrained temple architecture, the arcaded capital of the building is much more exuberant, with intricate foliate ornament along the pilasters, and an impressive overhanging cornice.

Burnham & Company's design for the Continental and Commercial National Bank Building, completed two years after Burnham's death, took the concept of using traditional bank architecture on commercial high-rise structures further, incorporating the ground floor and second floor banking hall within a three-story colonnade marked by Doric columns. Instead of the arcaded capital seen on the National Commercial Bank, the Continental and Commercial National Bank building is topped with a colonnaded capital that mimics the design of the base and reinforces the reference to temple-style bank buildings.

By the early 1920s, D. H. Burnham & Company's successor firm, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White had taken this model for high-rise bank buildings to its logical conclusion in their design for the Federal Reserve Bank Building. The three-story base of the building is essentially a temple-front bank building, with a center portico along the LaSalle Street façade supported by Corinthian Columns and topped with a triangular pediment.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sections 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Commercial National Bank Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship.

- The Commercial National Bank Building is an early example of a Classical Revival commercial high rise bank building in the Loop. Completed in 1907, the building was a precursor to the monumental Classical Revival banks that would form an urban canyon along LaSalle Street by the late 1920s.

- The Commercial National Bank Building epitomizes the Classical Revival architectural style utilized for large-scale commercial buildings. The building's monumental colonnaded base, arcaded capital, and overhanging cornice are all hallmarks of the style.

Postcard of Commercial National Bank Building, circa 1908

- The Commercial National Bank Building, with its rusticated granite base and giant-order granite columns, exhibits excellent design and craftsmanship in traditional masonry.

Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect or Designer

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Commercial National Bank Building is the oldest surviving example of a high-rise commercial bank building in Chicago designed by D. H. Burnham & Company, one of the most significant architectural firms in Chicago during the late 19th and early 20th century.

- The Commercial National Bank Building epitomizes Daniel H. Burnham's design sensibility for grandly scaled commercial office buildings with Classical Revival detailing. The building, compared to Burnham's earlier bank buildings including the First National Bank, reflects the firm's evolving ideas on the merging of the iconic temple-front bank buildings with a tripartite commercial high-rise form.

- Daniel Burnham became a national figure in his role as Director of Works for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where he supervised scores of architects and workmen in the construction of Chicago's first world's fair. The success of the "White City" was in no small part due to Burnham's drive and vision.

- Burnham's involvement with the 1893 Expo led to a successful career as an urban planner, which culminated in his development with Edward H. Bennett of the *Plan of Chicago* in 1909. The plan called for, among other things, a continuous park along the Lake Michigan shoreline and inspired the creation of Grant Park, the extension northward of Michigan Avenue, and the construction of the Michigan Avenue Bridge and Wacker Drive.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic value.

The Commercial National Bank Building has experienced changes common to buildings of its vintage and use. On the exterior, the ground level storefronts and two main entrances have been modified and a lighting soffit added above the first floor. The 1907 cornice was replaced with a simpler cornice in 1927.

As noted in this report, the building served as the headquarters for Commonwealth Edison from 1912 to 1998. The utility altered limited portions of the exterior of the building at the street-facing south and east facades. A black metal soffit cantilevered just above the 1st floor was installed sometime between 1918 and 1947 and housed up-light and indirect down-light fixtures. The soffit was altered/rebuilt in 1966 to accommodate exposed fluorescent down-light fixtures and heat lamps. The building underwent a comprehensive renovation between 1947 and 1951 in

which Commonwealth Edison and architects Naess & Murphy updated the building's south and west entrances with new Mid-century Modern style stone surrounds and steel and glass storefronts and revolving doors; most of the 1947-1951 revolving doors have been replaced with steel and glass double doors. (The 1947-1951 renovation also included changes to the interior though the interior is not proposed for inclusion in the significant historical and architectural features).

These later alterations to the building are reversible and their physical extent is limited to portions of the first floor of the building. As such they do not hinder the building's ability to express its historic, architectural, and aesthetic value. The vast majority of the building's primary south and west elevations reflect its original 1907 design. The building retains its character-defining original 1907 massing, fenestration pattern, and Classical Revival decorative features.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

The Commission recommends that the 1947-1951 changes to the exterior of the first floor not be included in the significant historical and architectural features of the property. These alterations do not contribute to the significance of the original design nor are they extensive enough to posses outstanding significance on their own. The physical character of these alterations is not compatible with the scale, ornamental vocabulary, workmanship and material pallet of the building's original design as conceived by Daniel Burnham in 1907. Installation of the Mid-century Modern style stone surrounds and steel and glass storefronts resulted in the removal of historic features and the black metal soffit obscures portions of the façade.

Based upon its evaluation of the Commercial National Bank Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

  The black metal soffit installed sometime between 1918 and 1947 and cantilevered just above the first floor, as well as the Mid-century Modern-style polished granite entrance surrounds and their steel and glass storefronts and their revolving doors are all excluded from the significant features. These features may be removed subject to the review of the Commission. The foregoing is not intended to limit the Commission's discretion to approve other changes.

The photograph above shows one of the two building entrances modified between 1947 and 1951 with polished granite door surrounds as well as the steel and glass storefronts. The photograph at left shows the black metal soffit installed sometime between 1918 and 1947 and cantilevered just above the first floor.

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